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SUBJECT An Interview with Senator Huddleston and Ray Cline

DAVID HARTMAN: Sixteen minutes after 7:00 right now.

The CIA used to spend about half of its annual budget on what is called covert operations. In this post Vietnam, post Watergate period, the CIA has been spending about 2% of its budget on behind-the-scenes efforts abroad. At the same time, the Russians have stepped up their covert operations.

The crises in Iran and Afghanistan are causing many of our country's leaders, including President Carter, to reconsider the restraints that have been imposed on the CIA in recent years. Walter Huddleston is a Democratic senator from Kentucky. He is Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee which is right now considering a bill to ease the restrictions on the CIA. Ray Cline worked for the CIA for 20 years, held a number of top jobs in the agency. He is now with the Strategic Study Center of Georgetown University. And both are in Washington this morning with Steve Bell.

Good morning, gentlemen, and welcome.

SENATOR WALTER HUDDLESTON: Good morning.

RAY CLINE: Good morning, David.

HARTMAN: First of all, Mr. Cline, it sounds like you're an old pro at this business of intelligence. What's your assessment, briefly, right now, of the CIA's capabilities?

CLINE: Well, in covert action abroad to influence foreign affairs in a favorable way, we have engaged in uni-

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lateral disarmament. We have almost no capability by choice. We can presumably, in time, reconstitute it. But for the past several years, the policy has been not to engage in any major covert action abroad.

HARTMAN: Senator Huddleston, would you agree that we don't have a capability in covert action and we need it?

SENATOR WALTER D. HUDDLESTON: Well, certainly we need it. But we do have some capability, and we are engaged in covert action almost continually at some spot around the world.

I do not disagree with Ray Cline that that capability has declined in recent years. That's been a policy decision by the government of the United States and abetted, I might say, by Congress itself.

STEVE BELL: But the real question is, gentlemen: is it a wrong policy? Do we need to beef up the CIA to go back more deeply into covert operations?

CLINE: After 31 years in intelligence work, I resigned from the government to be able to say, yes, we need a good intelligence system, including a small, selective, but effective covert action....

HARTMAN: You're not saying, Mr. Cline, that we go back to illegal acts, the business of assassination and illegal overthrows and that kind of thing, are you?

CLINE: Assassination was always a part of hoopla of the Frank Church investigation that bulked much larger than it ever did in the agency. You've got to remember the CIA never really assassinated anybody. They tried to assassinate Castro and failed.

The main business of covert action is giving money and advice, good intelligence, occasionally some arms, small arms and paramilitary assistance to your friends abroad, to people whose strategic and political purposes are the same as those of the United States.

BELL: Do either of you feel that if the CIA had not been cut back in the way it was after Vietnam and Watergate that we could have prevented what happened in Iran or Afghanistan?

CLINE: I think we could have changed the pattern of events in Iran, and, of course, Iran was the event. The collapse of Iran, the collapse of stability and the deterrent force of a stable government there is what led to Afghanistan.

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Whether we could have prevented a lot of trouble is another matter. But the exact disaster which occurred is so bad and so much beyond belief that I feel quite confident that a dynamic intelligence service could have pre-warned about it, which is the key, and taken some steps.

BELL: Isn't it true, however, that part of the disaster was the way the Shah was running his country, the Shah that our CIA put in power? And the CIA had created SAVAK, his secret terror organization that the Iranians are blaming for everything.

SENATOR HUDDLESTON: Well, I think that's a point, Steve. You have to recognize that covert action carries with it a considerable amount of risk in nearly every instance. Our committee, the Intelligence Committee of the Senate, has determined that we ought to have a covert action capability and has provided in the charters and guidelines that we are preparing to introduce authority for covert action. We still believe that covert action ought to be undertaken in extraordinary circumstances, that there ought to be a mechanism established so that we go into these things very carefully, we assess the potential damage and we know exactly what the risks are when we do undertake them. And that's what we propose....

HARTMAN: Senator....

CLINE: I agree -- I agree....

BELL: You want to respond to my comments on SAVAK.

CLINE: Yeah, I think you're misstating the case on SAVAK. It was not a creation of the CIA. The CIA helped the Iranian military and other Iranians who wanted to preserve the Shah's position back in 1953. The Shah then set up SAVAK. When you have a foreign intelligence agency, obviously CIA has to work with it in liaison. But it was not built on the CIA model, because it was essentially an internal security system. As you know, CIA has no law enforcement or internal security operations.

HARTMAN: Senator Huddleston, excuse me. What should we expect from the CIA in the next ten years? And what changes do you think need to be made in order to allow and enable the CIA to do that job?

SENATOR HUDDLESTON: Well, first of all, I think we need to modify the Hughes-Ryan requirement that the CIA report to eight committees of Congress on its covert activity plans. Our position is that they ought to report only to the Intelligence Committees of the House and Senate where very good

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security procedures are established.

Secondly, the CIA is confronted with numerous requests for Freedom of Information information, some of it coming from foreign sources. We think that ought to be tightened up and they ought to be relieved from a great deal of that requirement.

And then, thirdly, there needs to be much stronger legislation relating to the revealing of the identity of our agents around the country when such revelation will cause potential harm or potential danger to those agents. We have all three of those things in our package of legislation that we hope to introduce very soon now.

In addition to that, of course, they need the financial resources. I think there's great sentiment in the Congress to give them what they need, with proper control and proper oversight by the Congress, because we are dealing with secret operations, operations that are removed from the sight of the American people. And I think it's necessary that we have a certain amount of control and oversight over their activities.

HARTMAN: Senator Huddleston, thanks for joining us this morning. Mr. Cline, thank you. Thanks, Steve.

We'll be back in just a couple of minutes.